

## Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 EB-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-20 IGA-02

CIAE-00 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 /142 W

----- 063377

P 071132Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8827

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO CINCPAC

USIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 19019

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, EAID, TH

SUBJ: FY 74 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION RESTRICTION

REF: A. STATE 236151

B. STATE 230378 (1972)

C. SECDEF O 212154Z DEC 72

D. SECDEF 301708Z DEC 72

E. BANGKOK 9407 (1972)

F. BANGKOK 9147 (1972)

G. BANGKOK 8530

H. BANGKOK 9557

SUMMARY: REGARDING THE QUESTIONS POSED IN PARAGRAPH 5  
OF REFTEL A, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GIVE DEFINITIVE ANSWERS  
RE ATTITUDES AND POLICY OF PRESENT RTG WITHOUT A TEST CASE.  
AS YOU KNOW, THE THAI GOVERNMENT UNDER WHICH RESTRICTIONS ON  
BASE VISITS CAME INTO EXISTENCE WAS OVERTHROWN AS THE RESULT  
OF STUDENT UPRISINGS IN OCTOBER. WE HAVE NOT REQUESTED MEDIA  
VISITS FROM THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. TWO NEWSMEN ARE PRESSING  
FOR ACCESS TO NAKORN PHANOM AND UDORN RIGHT NOW. WE CAN PROD  
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THE RTG TO APPROVE THESE VISITS IF WASHINGTON APPROVES.

ANOTHER QUESTION ASKED REF (A) IS WHETHER ACCESS HAS BEEN DENIED DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS. IN FACT, AUGUST 1972 WAS A TURNING POINT ON MEDIA VISITS TO THAI BASES. BEFORE THAT THEY WERE RARE; SINCE THEN WE HAVE HAD NINE. BETWEEN AUGUST 1972 AND THE OVERTHROW OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT TO SAY THEY WERE DENYING AMERICAN NEWSMEN ACCESS TO THE BASES, EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF THE USSAG HQ AT NAKORN PHANOM, WHICH THEY CONSIDERED PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE POLITICALLY. THAT IS, THEY USUALLY APPROVED THE VISITS WE REQUESTED, ALBEIT AFTER SOME FOOT-DRAGGING. THIS WAS SOMETIMES MATCHED BY FOOT-DRAGGING IN WASHINGTON. HOPEFULLY THE FOLLOWING DETAILED ACCOUNT WILL CLARIFY THE PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE AUGUST 1972 THE MISSION HAS CONDUCTED NINE MEDIA VISITS TO BASES IN THAILAND. PARTICIPATION IN FOUR OF THESE WAS BY US AND THIRD-COUNTRY MEDIA ONLY; IN THE OTHER FIVE, THAI MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS ALSO TOOK PART. PROCEDURES FOLLOWED FOR ALL THESE VISITS WERE THE ONES AGREED UPON BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND THE RTG IN MID-1972. THAT IS, AMERICAN AND THIRD-COUNTRY NEWSMEN MAKE APPLICATION WITH US AUTHORITIES IN BANGKOK. WHEN SEVERAL OF THESE HAVE BEEN RECEIVED THE EMBASSY THEN TRIES TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE US MILITARY ON A PLACE AND TIME, AND, FOR THAT MATTER, ON WHETHER THE MILITARY AGREES THAT A VISIT CAN TAKE PLACE AT ALL. (AT PRESENT, FINAL APPROVAL ON THE MILITARY SIDE MUST BE OBTAINED AT THE DOD LEVEL.) ONCE APPROVAL HAS BEEN OBTAINED FROM THE APPROPRIATE U.S. MILITARY AUTHORITIES, A REQUEST IS MADE TO THE RTG, THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA). WHERE THAI NEWSMEN ARE CONCERNED, THE MFA TAKES THE INITIATIVE IN INVITING THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN VISITS THAT HAVE BEEN SET UP FOR THE AMERICAN AND THIRD-COUNTRY PRESS.

2. THERE WAS INTENSE PRESSURE FOR GROUP VISITS OR ANY KIND OF VISITS DURING DECEMBER 1972 AND THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1973, DURING VARIOUS PHASES OF THE PARIS NEGOTIATIONS. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THERE WAS A US EFFORT TO MAINTAIN A LOW PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROFILE WITH RESPECT TO BOMBING. WASHINGTON GUIDANCE AT THAT

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TIME WAS FOR NO BASE VISITS (REFS B,C, & D). DURING THIS SAME PERIOD, THE RTG TOLD ALL NEWSMEN WHO ASKED THAT THEY HAD NO OBJECTION WHATSOEVER TO BASE VISITS IF THESE WERE REQUESTED BY THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. NEWSMEN ASKED US INNUMERABLE TIMES DURING THIS PERIOD WHETHER WE HAD ASKED RTG PERMISSION FOR BASE VISITS. THE ANSWER GIVEN WAS NO.

3. ANOTHER ISSUE INVOLVED IS THE DISTINCTION NEWSMEN MAKE BETWEEN GROUP VISITS AND INDIVIDUAL VISITS BY ONE OR TWO NEWSMEN. SOME NEWSMEN MAINTAIN THAT THEY DO NOT WANT TO WAIT FOR ORGANIZED GROUP VISITS, THEY WANT TO GO ALONE ON SHORT NOTICE WHENEVER THEY FEEL THIS IS NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT AN ASSIGNMENT. THE RTG HAS INDICATED TO US THAT THEY MUCH PREFER GROUP VISITS, AS HAS THE US MILITARY.

4. THE ONLY ACTUAL DISAPPROVALS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE RTG SINCE AUGUST 1972 INVOLVED TWO REQUESTS TO VISIT NAKORN PHANOM (REFS G,H). THEY TURNED US DOWN IN THOSE INSTANCES BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE AT NAKORN PHANOM OF THE USSAG HQ, WHICH THEY CONSIDERED A MATTER OF PARTICULAR POLITICAL SENSITIVITY. THEY HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY APPROVED MEDIA PARTICIPATION IN A VISIT TO NAKORN PHANOM BY THE LEAGUE OF FAMILIES, SPECIFICALLY TO VISIT THE JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER ONLY.

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ACTION PM-07

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5. THE MAIN PROBLEM DURING THE PERIOD WE ARE DISCUSSING HERE HAS NOT BEEN ACTUAL DISAPPROVALS (EXCEPT FOR U.S. IMPOSED FREEZE CITED IN PARA 2) BUT RATHER FOOT-DRAGGING. A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PERSUASION HAS FIRST OF ALL BEEN NECESSARY TO CONVINCE THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE THAT THIS OR THAT BASE VISIT WAS IN EVERYONE'S BEST INTERESTS. ONCE THIS APPROVAL HAS BEEN OBTAINED,

THERE HAS BEEN BUCK-PASSING ON THE THAI SIDE, WITH THE REQUEST FINALLY PASSED TO THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE FORMER RTG (I.E., THE PRIME MINISTER) FOR APPROVAL. IN ONE INSTANCE THIS WAS OBTAINED SO CLOSE TO OUR DEADLINE THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO NOTIFY THE NEWSMEN IN TIME, SO THAT THE WHOLE PROCESS HAD TO BEGIN AGAIN FROM SCRATCH--I.E., NEW DATE SET, NEW REQUEST SUBMITTED IN WRITING, ETC.

6. THE MISSION'S FLEXIBILITY IN HANDLING THE PROBLEM OF BASE VISITS WOULD BE GREATLY ENHANCED IF PERMISSION ON THE US SIDE COULD BE OBTAINED IN COUNTRY WITHOUT HAVING TO GO TO DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR EACH VISIT TO A THAI BASE. (NATURALLY WE WOULD WANT TO COORDINATE WHERE SECURITY OR DIPLOMATIC SENSITIVITIES WERE INVOLVED.) WE NOTE THAT CINCPAC PUBLIC AFFAIRS LIAISON OFFICE, BANGKOK, WITH AMEMB CONCURRENCE, HAS REQUESTED THAT THIS AUTHORITY BE VESTED IN THEM, (MACTHAI 290535Z SEP 73) AND THAT CINCPAC HAS CONFIDENTIAL

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RECOMMENDED TO DOD THAT THE REQUEST BE GRANTED (CINCPAC 032358Z OCT 73). WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT THE REQUEST BE APPROVED BY WASHINGTON.

7. THE VISITS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE HAVE TAKEN MUCH OF THE EDGE OFF CHARGES OF "SECRET BASES." WE STILL HAVE SEVERAL REQUESTS OF LONG-STANDING TO VISIT FACILITIES THE NEWSMEN HAVE NOT YET SEEN, ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS, BUT MOST OF THESE ARE DORMANT IN THAT NEWSMEN HAVE NOT MENTIONED THEM FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. DURING THE LAST WEEK, HOWEVER, JACK FOISIE OF THE LOS ANGELES TIMES HAS RENEWED HIS REQUEST TO SEE THE COMMANDERS OF USSAG AND 13TH ADVON AS WELL AS DEPCHIEF, ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS AND AT THEIR HQ. BOB KAYLOR OF UPI HAS ASKED TO VISIT "ANY BASE" AND ALSO HQ, 13TH ADVON AT UDORN. BOTH HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN US MILITARY READINESS DURING THE OIL CRISIS. WOULD WASHINGTON LIKE US TO TRY TO SET UP THESE VISITS FOR FOISIE AND KAYLOR AT THE PRESENT TIME? ONLY IF WASHINGTON GIVES APPROVAL TO THESE VISITS CAN WE DETERMINE THE RTG ATTITUDE. (CINCPAC PUBLIC AFFAIRS LIAISON OFFICE, BANGKOK HAS TOLD US INFORMALLY THAT WASHINGTON DOES NOT WANT BASE VISITS AT THIS TIME.) KINTNER

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## Message Attributes

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